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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001660

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 1546

[B](#). ANKARA 1364

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reason: 1.5
(b)(d).

[1](#)1. (U) Late afternoon March 14 President Sezer approved AK leader Erdogan's cabinet list and sent it to the Turkish Parliament for consideration and eventual vote of confidence. Erdogan is now officially Prime Minister.

[1](#)2. (C) Erdogan's new cabinet is largely the same as that of his predecessor Abdullah Gul, with the following changes:

-- The number of State Ministers has been cut to three; portfolios not announced yet;

-- Former P.M. Gul will now serve as both Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, replacing the hapless and stale Yasar Yakis;

-- Former Deputy P. M. Ertugrul Yalcinbayir is out. Yalcinbayir openly opposed and worked against the AK Government's March 1 petition to authorize deployment of U.S. troops to Turkey and Turkish troops abroad;

-- Huseyin Celik, a Gul ally, and former ANAP member Erkan Mumcu swapped positions -- with Celik now at Education and Mumcu -- a lightning rod of liberal reformism and a staunch critic of the Kemalist State -- moving over to the less sensitive Culture Ministry;

-- Kursat Tuzmen -- the former MHPer who as State Minister for Foreign Trade paid a controversial Jan. 12 visit to Saddam -- is now Minister of the Environment, replacing Imdat Sutluoglu, now out of the Cabinet;

-- Notably, Ali Babacan hung on to his post as State Minister for the Treasury -- despite intense speculation that he was heading for the axe.

-- The experienced, level-headed Naksibendi trio of Cemil Cicek, Abdulkadir Aksu and Vecdi Gonul -- all of whom recognize the importance of good relations with the United States -- retain their posts at Justice, Interior and Defense, respectively.

What's Next

[1](#)3. (C) Erdogan interpreter Egemen Bagis told us immediately after the announcement that the Parliament will remain in session throughout the weekend and thus could hold a vote of confidence as early as Monday, March 17, but more likely by the middle of that week.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The limited shake-up ran counter to the bulk of the speculation in the past week -- except that offered privately to us by AK's unofficial godfather Korkut Ozal, who cautioned Erdogan against big changes early on (ref A). In any event, Erdogan was elected to Parliament March 9 and is moving rapidly into position (ref B). However, it is unclear as to what this portends for his Government's willingness or ability to push rapidly another troop deployment decision. Bagis offered his "personal view" to us that Erdogan had taken a big risk and failed on the deployment resolution March 1, and that therefore before he does anything else on this front he needs to: 1) win a confidence vote and thereby 2) prepare the groundwork for an overwhelming victory on any new resolution.

PEARSON